

MICHAEL T. McCAUL

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RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE
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COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4310

October 7, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Ms. Katharine Sullivan
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice
810 Seventh St. NW
Washington, DC 20531

Ms. Jessica Hart
Director
Office for Victims of Crime
U.S. Department of Justice
810 Seventh St NW
Washington, D.C. 20531

Dear Attorney General Barr, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Sullivan and Director Hart:

I am writing to you today to request more flexibility in the grant process for organizations applying for funding related to human trafficking and sexual assault survivors. During this difficult time non-profits and service organizations are seeing greater and broader needs from our distressed communities. This is happening at the same time they are experiencing depleted funding streams, due largely to the inability to hold fundraisers during these unprecedented times. As these organizations pivot to provide food and shelter to those hit hard by the pandemic, I am concerned that the most vulnerable victims, human trafficking and sexual abuse survivors, may not be receiving the care that they so desperately need.

We know that during hard economic times and global emergencies, rates of trafficking and exploitation skyrocket as communities weaken, support structures crumble and people become more vulnerable to predatory traffickers.

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As you may know, in the last month alone 39 endangered children ranging from ages 13-18 years old were rescued in Georgia and 25 additional minors were rescued in Ohio. Of those rescued in Georgia, at least 15 were identified as trafficking victims. This is undoubtedly a fraction of what is happening across the U.S. According to Polaris, calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline have increased by 40% during COVID-19 as compared to this time last year.

As a passionate advocate in the fight against human trafficking and domestic violence, it is vital that we find ways to get resources to victims in need as soon as possible. To do so, I ask that the Department of Justice, in particular the Office of Justice Programs, examine the grants offered under the Office for Victims of Crime and consider transitioning them to rolling grants in which organizations can apply for and receive funding throughout the year. Additionally, expanding the amount of grants that can be used nationwide would help organizations reach unserved or underserved communities across the U.S. These changes could greatly improve an organization's ability to continue servicing victims of human trafficking or provide new services that are desperately needed such as housing, counseling and training for new victim advocates.

I am a strong proponent of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) that was established in 1984 as part of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). I applaud the work that the Department of Justice has done to provide funding for services that directly help victims, particularly those who have suffered the heinous crime of sex trafficking. In your efforts to work with non-profits and service organizations to fight this injustice I encourage you to examine innovative approaches to the grant processes under the Office of Justice Programs and the Office for Victims of Crime. Please consider ways, such as rolling grants or nationwide grants, that will maximize the government's ability to facilitate the quick deployment of vital services to those in our country who need them the most.

Please contact me if there is anything I can do to help in this matter.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress